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THE **ISPATCH**  
NOV 2014

THE MAGAZINE OF THE TEXAS MILITARY FORCES

## 6th CST makes the mark

The making of an  
**Honor Grad**

**Texas Guardsman**  
saves a life



## Ejercicio Salitre

Texas Air National Guardsmen travel to Chile  
to participate in the multinational exercise



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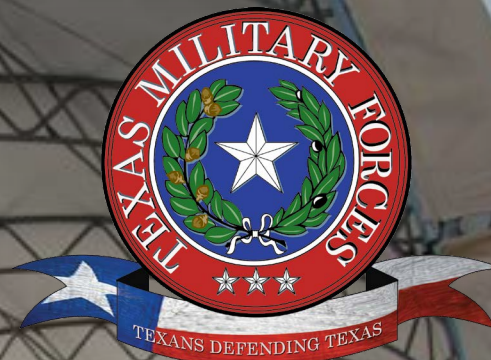
Aircraft from various nations participating in Salitre 2014 at Cerro Moreno Air Force Base, Chile, Oct. 10, 2014. (U.S Air National Guard photo by Senior Master Sgt. Miguel Arellano)







An F-16 crew chief from the Chilean Air Force prepares to taxi out an F-16 Fighting Falcon from the 149th Fighter Wing, Texas Air National Guard, during the State Partnership Program at Cerro Moreno Air Force Base, Chile, as part of a multi-national exercise, Salitre 2014, Oct. 10, 2014. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Senior Master Sgt. Elizabeth Gilbert)



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# Thank you for your Service





# “Mentoring is a brain to pick, an ear to listen, and a push in the right direction” (John C. Crosby)

**Commentary by Col. Marcos Santillan  
Director of Staff - Texas Air National Guard**

**M**entoring is hard to define and even harder to accomplish in our daily professional hectic schedules. Therefore, I challenge all senior leaders in the Texas Military Forces, officers and enlisted, to make time in the coming weeks to find at least one service member to mentor.

Air Force Instruction 36-3401 & Air National Guard Instruction 36-3401 define mentoring as a relationship in which a person with greater experience and wisdom guides another person to develop both personally and professionally.

Army Regulation 600-100 defines mentoring as the voluntary developmental relationship that exists between a person of greater experience and a person of lesser experience that is characterized by mutual trust and respect.

Despite the difference in branch of service, all components agree that leaders have a responsibility to develop those junior to them and that mentoring requires a commitment on the part of the mentor, and the mentee, to ensure the mentee's goals are progressing forward. Assessment, feedback and guidance are critical within the mentoring relationship and should be valued and sought out by the mentee in order for growth and development to occur.

Whether a mentee has questions on profes-

sional military education, promotions, military benefits, deployments, family readiness, professional and unprofessional relationships or even dress and appearance, a mentor can provide guidance, direction and insight based on their years of experience.

Mentors can also act as a trusted safety net, offering encouragement and support when Soldiers and Airmen experience stressors due to juggling family issues, finances and deployments.

**M-model  
E-empathize  
N-nurture  
T-teach  
O-organize  
R-respond  
I-inspire  
N-network  
G-goal-setting**

To better equip you for the task at hand, I'd like to offer this quick acronym to help facilitate a positive mentoring program for our members of the Texas Military Forces.

## **Model:**

Model: An effective mentor must lead by example. A mentor should be a model of composure, dignity, integrity and professionalism under all conditions, both on duty and off duty.

## **Empathize:**

Mentoring involves something more than



teaching. This extra ingredient is empathy. The ability to empathize allows a mentor to anticipate issues and proactively take steps to smooth the path.

**Nurture:**

Nurturing encompasses a caring attitude, with an emphasis on personal and professional development.

**Teach:**

A mentor should act as a teacher when it comes to the mentee's personal character and professional growth. A Soldier or Airman's development as a consummate professional is a top priority because it is the foundation for their overall success.

**Organize:**

"If you don't know where you're going, how will you know when you get there?" By developing a desired-end state before beginning the mentoring process, a mentor can concentrate efforts toward the desired goals.

**Respond:**

Mentoring is a communicative process. Mentors must be available and responsive to truly listen to, understand and help answer questions from their mentees.

**Inspire:** True mentoring encompasses something extra, an element of inspiration.

The mentor who can inspire the mentee will have a profound, deeply rooted effect on that person for perhaps an entire lifetime.

**Network:**

A good mentor introduces the mentee to other people who can also provide support, information and resources.

**Goal-setting:**

Mentors teach the need for goal-setting and help mentees master the process of establishing and pursuing specific, measurable and attainable goals.

Mentoring provides a framework to bring about a cultural change in the way we view the professional development of future leaders. It is perhaps the most powerful method by which we can shape the future of our organizations.

After all, Harvey Firestone said, "It is only as we develop others that we permanently succeed."



So I ask- Have you mentored anyone today?

■ **FROM THE TOP**







# High marks for

# Civil Support Team

Texas Army National Guard's 6th Civil Support Team  
evaluated on skills

Staff Sgt. Jorge Hernandez, with the 6th Civil Support Team, 136th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade, checks a detector reading during an evaluation by Army North in San Antonio, Texas, Sept. 9, 2014.





*Story and photos by  
Staff Sgt. Jennifer Atkinson  
for JTF 136th MEB Public Affairs Office*

**S**AN ANTONIO, TEXAS - With long shadows cast across the blank theater screen and orange plastic hazmat suits glowing in the glare of portable halogen lights, two Soldiers from the 6th Civil Support Team, Texas Army National Guard, moved slowly through the dark building, searching for the device prompting this "incident response."

Circling an out-of-place orange safety cone, Sgt. Jared Brooks radioed details back to the command post, confirming the target, while Staff Sgt. Jorge Hernandez stood at a safe distance. Both steadily ignored the shrill beeping of monitors nearby to concentrate on the cone.

Turning the cone over, Brooks uncovered a nest of wires, batteries and containers, taped together in a dangerous tangle - the source of the toxins causing alarm.

Nearby, evaluators from Army North watched every move, from the approach of the building, to the use of various monitoring devices, to the search to the contact with the command post. At each step, Brooks or Hernandez answered questions about proper procedures, such as marking the door to indicate the team had moved through it, or how to notate each cleared area.

For Brooks and Hernandez, this was more than training, this was an evaluation of all the hard work and training in the past year- not just theirs individually, but the Austin-based CST as a whole.







## “ If I had one thing to tell someone about the CST. It’s that they’re professionals. Just absolute professionals. ”

“Right now, we’re watching to make sure they’re doing it right,” said Anthony Elmore, an ARNORTH evaluator. With tightly-controlled doses of reactive chemicals to set off the detection equipment, the realism is increased, he said. The evaluation is to certify to the National Guard Bureau that the CST is proficient in standardized incident response procedures.

“The gases make it harder, gives them a time-constraint. These guys have to make real-time decisions, just like they would in real life. There’s not a lot of time to sit and think about it” he said, as his fellow evaluator hooked up a detector to a clear bag containing reactive gas. “It’s not going to hurt anyone, but it makes it a lot more real.”

Neutralizing the threat might seem like the biggest hurdle to clearing a site, but for Brooks, just finding the object can be daunting.

“It’s not always easy to find,” said Brooks. “There’s a lot of room out there to hide in,” he said, gesturing to the theater and surroundings.

After finding and clearing the hazard, Brooks and Hernandez head outside to the technical decontamination area, manned by Sgt. 1st Class Kelly Goering, another CST member suited up in a tan plastic suit, a bright blue oxygen tank on her back. The technical decontamination area is for the responders, said Goering, rather than larger numbers who might have been affected.

“We’re trying to get the Soldiers out

of the affected suits without contaminating them, or spreading any more contamination, as we do it,” she said.

In the entrance to the decontamination tent, Hernandez slipped his boots off, scrubbing down with water while standing in a large rubber catch basin. Coming out of the tent, Goering swabbed his suit, testing it for remaining residue. The suit was slit open and folded down on itself open so Hernandez could exit without contamination from the outside of the suit.

Still wearing an oxygen tank and face mask, his clothing soaked with sweat from the heat inside his suit, Hernandez waited to one side while Brooks followed the same procedure, then both headed off to the medics to get a post mission check-up. Evaluators nearby watched each step closely, making sure Goering cleared each Soldier to proceed to the next step.

Since the bright orange suits are “level A” suits, rated for vapors, Goering’s suit was a “level B” suit, rated for splashing hazards.

“Ideally, the vapor would have dissipated between the buildings and here, so that’s not really a threat to me,” she said. “But if it hasn’t and it gets in the water, the level B suit protects me.”

The CST isn’t just about detecting threats, said Col. Lee D Schnell, commander of the 136th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade.

“Their capabilities are as sophisti-

cated as any out there, especially the mobile lab. It’s as good as anything you’ll find at a university or college.”

Although there were no civilian partner agencies on site for the evaluation, the CST is closely integrated with the first responder community.

“This team gives smaller communities a resource they might not have access to normally,” said Schnell. “Larger cities have fire departments with the equipment, but little towns don’t, so we can help them if they need it.”

The year-round training shows in the high level of skill throughout the CST, said Schnell.

“If I had one thing to tell someone about the CST,” he said. “It’s that they’re professionals. Just absolute professionals.” - **JTF 136<sup>th</sup> MEB PAO**





Sgt. 1st Class Kerry Goering slits Sgt. Jared Brooks' hazmat suit open so he can exit at the technical decontamination station during an evaluation by Army North in San Antonio, Texas, Sept. 9, 2014.





## An TXANG Optometrist follows lifelong dream

Story and photo by Senior Airman Susanna Coronel  
147th Reconnaissance Wing Public Affairs Office

**E**LLINGTON FIELD, TEXAS - As a young man, Mark K. Davis knew what he wanted to do once he finished college – join the Navy. Several family members had served in the Navy, and he wanted to follow in their footsteps.

Davis wanted to be an aviator and upon graduation he went to see a recruiter to make it happen. Unfortunately, that dream was put aside once he was told he could not be a pilot because he was colorblind. The recruiter gave him other options, but none appealed to him.

Not being able to serve in the Navy as a pilot, he decided to go back to school and became an optometrist. After graduating, he opened his own practice, got married and had kids. He said he thought he would never get to serve his country and gave up on that dream.

At age 55, Lt. Col. Mark K. Davis, the optometrist for the Texas Air National Guard's 147th Medical Group, 147th Reconnaissance Wing at Ellington Field in Houston, is proving that one is never too old to make their dreams come true.

Three and a half years ago Davis received a call from a friend who was serving in the Texas Air National Guard. The

optometrist working at the wing was retiring, and they were looking for a replacement. When Davis was asked if he knew of anyone interested in joining the military and taking the job, he recommended himself.

"I finally got to serve my country," said Davis. "God answers prayers."

Davis is happy because not only is he serving his country, but he gets to help others.

"I think God put you on this earth to serve other human beings," said Davis.

In the summer of 2014, Davis found himself volunteering to do just that when he participated in Operation Pacific Angel-Tonga.

Operation PACANGEL is a joint and combined humanitarian mission that takes place throughout the Pacific. It has been in operation for seven years.

"The Nevada National Guard is actually the one linked up to go on PACANGEL, but their optometrist just had a baby and couldn't go" said Davis. "Their commander called my commander and asked if she knew of someone who may want to go."

Col. Rhonda M. Jahns, the 147th Medical Group commander, recommended Davis for the job.

On July 11, Davis, along with the Nevada National Guard, started making his way to Tongatapu, the main island of Tonga for the PACANGEL mission.

He was one of three optometrists providing their services in the PACANGEL mission, said Davis.

"We did eye exams, treated eye infections, and did minor office surgery," said Davis.

It was a very fast-paced environment, said Davis.

"Each doctor saw about 100 patients a day," said Davis. "We also dispensed about 2,000 pairs of glasses. All in all, we saw about 1,500 patients, and we referred about 152 for surgery."

Davis said he feels it is an honor to serve his country and do a humanitarian mission at the same time.

"It was kind of wonderful that I got to go," said Davis. "I'm so blessed. I get to serve my country and serve other human beings." - **147th RW PAO**



# Service has no age





# Airmen Close Out Successful SALITRE Exercise

*Story by SMSgt. Elizabeth Gilbert  
136th Airlift Wing Public Affairs Office*





Aircraft from various nations participate in Salitre 2014 in Chile, Oct. 14, 2014. Salitre is a Chilean-led exercise where the U.S., Chile, Brazil, Argentina and Uruguay, focus on increasing interoperability between allied nations. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Senior Master Sgt. Miguel Arellano)

**A**NTOFAGASTA, CHILE - After flying more than 50 sorties, participating in two community relations events, entertaining multiple media events and experiencing a visit from the President of Chile, U.S. Airmen who participated in Chile's SALITRE 2014 exercise are returning home.

"The 149th Fighter Wing executed every sortie except for those that

were not executed due to weather," said Col. Mike Torrealday, the reserve advisor to the 12th Air Force (AFSOUTH) commander and exercise co-director. "Maintenance turned all their missions every single day ... they performed an outstanding job."

This was the first time the U.S. participated in SALITRE since 2012, but continued engagement and inter-

actions with the Chilean air force year-round with AFSOUTH and the Texas Air National Guard made entering into the exercise a smooth process.

"The Chilean air force personnel were very accommodating," said Maj. Darren Bemis, the Texas ANG's 149th Maintenance Squadron commander. "Everything we needed they brought to us, the support



was outstanding and the interaction between maintenance crews brought friendship and respect for one another.”

This wasn't the first visit to Chile by the Texas ANG this year. As state partners with the Chilean air force, Texas regularly works with their partners to the south.

“At FIDAE we communicated with

the Chileans and here at SALITRE we've shared ideas, we've shared experiences and in these two weeks we did the execution in the air,” said Lt. Col. Greg Pohoski, a 182nd Fighter Squadron pilot with the 149th FW. “With each trip we are building on our relations. We started with academics and ended with execution.”


The purpose of the State Partnership Program is to conduct mili-

tary-to-military engagements in support of defense security goals, but it also leverages whole-of-society relationships and capabilities to facilitate broader interagency and corollary engagements spanning military, government, economic and social spheres.

In addition to working with the Chilean air force, Airmen were able to interact with counterparts from

“ With each trip we  
are building on our  
relations... ”

An aircraft crew member taxis an F-16 Fighting Falcon from the 149th Fighter Wing, Texas Air National Guard during Salitre 2014 in Chile, Oct. 14, 2014. (Air National Guard photo by Senior Master Sgt. Miguel Arellano)

Click to follow the  
149th FW on Facebook 





Brazil, Argentina and Uruguay.

“The interaction between the Chilean air force fuels shop and the Texas ANG fuels shop helped us out greatly by exchanging knowledge and training,” said Master Sgt. Samuel Metz, a 149th MG aircraft systems fuels technician. “I was able to train them on a piece equipment used to inspect external fuel tanks which they never used before. I

showed them how to use it, so they can now inspect and certify other Chilean fuels specialists.”

Also adding on to the Texas ANG presence was an Ohio ANG KC-135 Stratotanker flying out of Santiago providing essential aerial refueling capability. - **136th AW PAO**



Engine mechanics from the 149th Maintenance Squadron, Texas Air National Guard perform an engine change on an F-16 Fighting Falcon during Salitre 2014, Oct. 12, 2014. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Senior Master Sgt. Elizabeth Gilbert)



Chilean air force Airman Paula Flores, air traffic controller, monitors her airspace as the aircrafts return from their sortie during the Salitre 2014, Chile, Oct. 14, 2014. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Senior Master Sgt. Elizabeth Gilbert)



# THE MAKING OF AN HONOR GRADUATE

**STORY AND PHOTOS BY CHRIS PORTER  
TEXAS ARMY NATIONAL GUARD  
RECRUITING AND RETENTION BATTALION**



Members of the Texas Army National Guard's Recruit Sustainment Program conduct physical training in Corpus Christi Aug. 10, 2014. (U.S. National Guard photo by Chris Porter)



**T**HIS YEAR, 39 members of the Texas Army National Guard were named Honor Graduates by their cadre at Basic Combat Training or Advanced Individual Training.

Since the early days of the Army as an all-volunteer force, countless new recruits have struggled with the physical, mental and cultural shock of military life. For many, the first taste of life in uniform doesn't come until they step off the bus at their training installation. While some will quickly adapt to the rigors of their military careers, others may find themselves at odds with the life they've chosen.

Recruits in the Texas Army National Guard find adjusting to military life a little easier, thanks in part to the National Guard's Recruit Sustainment Program, or RSP.

This month, dozens of Texas RSP Soldiers graduating from Basic Combat Training (BCT) or Advanced Individual Training (AIT) were named either Honor Graduates or Distinguished Honor Graduates. Both titles indicate a mastery of skills taught during the first months of military life, according to Sgt. Maj. Richard Grantham of Texas' RSP program.

"Honor graduates are the best of the best," Grantham said. "These recruits are in the top 10 percent of their Basic Combat Training class, meaning they have excelled in subjects like physical fitness, marksmanship and other Soldier skills. By completing training as Honor Graduates, these Soldiers come to their units more than ready to do their part for the mission."

### **Recruit Sustainment Program**

Basic Training begins before the end of high school for some National Guard Soldiers. Recruits who are part of the split-option training program attend basic training, the summer before their senior year of high school.



Texas Army National Guard Recruit Sustainment Program soldiers make their way across a land navigation course at Camp Bowie April 26, 2014. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. Praxedis Piñeda)

After BCT, those Soldiers return home to complete their senior year as civilians before attending military job-specific advanced training. Following graduation from AIT, these troops are assigned to their Texas Army National Guard Units across the state.

This means for many, there are significant gaps between enlistment, basic training, advanced training, and finally, unit assignment. Grantham said the RSP program is designed to keep those Soldiers' military skills fresh during those intervals when they're not wearing the uniform.

"When a Soldier returns home after BCT, it's easy to slip back into civilian life," Grantham said. "The RSP is there to ensure Soldiers stay on top of military skills while living at home prior to unit assignment."

To the Soldiers in RSP, this means monthly drill weekends — a staple for any member of the National Guard.





## WE EXPECT THE VERY BEST OUT OF OUR SOLDIERS, AND BEING NAMED AN HONOR GRADUATE IS A SMALL PART OF THAT. //

"It can get pretty intense for them," said Staff Sgt. Daniel Garza, RSP director for the Texas Army National Guard Recruiting Battalion's Team 17. Garza, along with other South Texas recruiters, led more than 50 RSP Recruits in early-morning physical training on the beaches of Corpus Christi in August.

"It's a full weekend of activities," Garza said. "We have a two-part goal. For those who haven't yet attended BCT, we're introducing them to some of the military skills they'll need when they arrive at Basic. For those who have already graduated BCT, we're reinforcing those skills and keeping them fresh for when they ship off to AIT or to their unit of assignment. The regular RSP drill weekends are held statewide, and each team of recruiters is charged with planning and executing a weekend's worth of training each month."

For Team 17's recruits in Corpus Christi, this meant a full day of running an obstacle course in the hot South Texas sun, followed by several hours of classroom instruction on topics such as military ranks and insignia, first aid, land navigation and more.

The following day, Garza and the Team 17 recruiters let the new Soldiers to the beach for a lengthy workout, which included ample push-ups, sit-ups and a long-distance run. The training is designed to challenge the recruits physically and mentally, leaders said.

"We try to keep the RSP drill weekends as close to what the Soldiers will experience in BCT as possible," said Lt. Col. Jason Hart, Commander of the Texas Army National Guard's Recruiting and Retention Battalion. "This means the recruits wear military uniforms and experience military discipline."

"It can be a shock to a young recruit who's still in high school," Hart added. "However, by introducing them to concepts such as military discipline and the chain of command prior to BCT, they're getting a leg-up that a Soldier on the active-duty side won't have when they arrive for training."



### Becoming an Honor Grad

The extra training has already paid off for dozens of Texas RSP graduates. Nearly 40 have been named Honor Graduates or Distinguished Honor Graduates so far in 2014.

In order to be named an Honor Graduate, a soldier must finish in the top 10 percent of their BCT or AIT company, Grantham said, while Distinguished Honor Graduates represent the top one percent of their training class.

For BCT Honor Graduates, this represents finishing with top scores in the Army Physical Fitness Test, along with other soldier skills evaluated during training. Honor Graduates of AIT are recognized for their outstanding performances in testing or certification related to their military occupational specialty, or MOS.

Each Honor Graduate receives a signed letter from a general officer congratulating them on their achievement, while some receive military decorations such as the Army Achievement Medal from their training battalion. Others receive a certificate of achievement and advancement in rank upon graduation.

"We expect the very best out of our Soldiers, and being





Members of the Texas Army National Guard's Recruit Sustainment Program conduct physical training in Corpus Christi Aug. 10, 2014. (U.S. National Guard photo by Chris Porter)

named an Honor Graduate is a small part of that,” said David Castorena, command sergeant major of the TX-ARNG Recruiting and Retention Battalion. “As members of the National Guard, these Soldiers are charged with completing the mission here in Texas or overseas. These Honor Graduates have proven that they have the skills, dedication and motivation to serve their communities no matter where the mission takes them.”

While keeping recruits’ skills fresh through RSP is one part of developing future Honor Graduates, Hart said it often comes down to something more basic: The people.

“Obviously, we’re going to do everything we can to give new recruits the skills and tools they need to excel at Basic Training,” Hart said. “All the training in the world won’t turn a recruit into an outstanding Soldier if they don’t have the personal drive to succeed, or the willingness to put their unit or their communities first. I believe our recruiters are doing an outstanding job of bringing in people who possess the qualities of selfless service, loyalty and devotion to duty that the National Guard requires. While training and RSP are an important part of making an Honor Graduate, it’s the recruit who has to strive to achieve that distinction. We are extremely proud of our Honor Graduates, and I know they’ll be an integral part of their units here in the National Guard.”

**- TXARNG R&R PAO**



Recruit Sustainment Program soldiers from the Texas Army National Guard's Recruiting & Retention Command take aim at a practice target during the Texas Strong Warrior Challenge in Brownwood April 26, 2014. U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. Praxedix Pineda)





# Celebrate TXMF Recycles Day

Camp Mabry  
November 13, 2014  
Bldg. 58a behind AAFES/PX

- Ceremonial kick-off is scheduled for 10:00
- Music and food served-up from 10:00 – 2:00
- Bring in your plastic bottles, aluminum cans, and cardboard to have a chance at winning the Grand Prize
- Enjoy Raffle drawings & Games to win some great give aways!!



# A life lesson learned in class

## Soldier saves roommate after accident

Story by Maj. Randall Stillinger  
36th Infantry Division Public Affairs Office

**G**RAPEVINE, TEXAS – A Texas Army National Guard soldier saved his roommate's life after the accidental discharge of a weapon in July.

Private 1st Class Wil Ledford, 19, of Grapevine, used skills and techniques that he had just been taught two months prior while attending the Combat Medic School at Fort Sam Houston in San Antonio.

Ledford, a 2013 graduate of Southlake Carroll High School and a member of Headquarters and Headquarters Troop, 3rd Squadron, 124th Cavalry Regiment in Wylie, was in his apartment when he heard a gunshot. He went in the next room, saw his roommate looking down at his leg, and asked, "Did you shoot yourself?"

The matter of fact response was a somewhat casual, "Yeah."

Ledford's military training instantly kicked in as the hollow point round had penetrated the femoral artery in the left leg and blood came out very fast. He described it as a "garden hose shooting red Kool Aid all over the place."

He went for his medical aid bag and proceeded to emplace a tourniquet as high as possible on the leg. The first tourniquet did not stop the bleeding so Ledford put on a second tourniquet, which worked.

When asked what he did next, Ledford replied, "I just threw him over my shoulder and carried him to his truck." He was referring to one of several carrying techniques that are taught to Combat Medics at Advanced Individual Training.

He then drove his roommate to an emergency room, which was less than five minutes away.

It wasn't until about 20 minutes later that he fully realized what had just happened. "Wow. He shot himself," Ledford said.

After several surgeries that included skin grafts and the removal of arteries from his other leg, Ledford's roommate was released from the hospital earlier this month and is expected to be able to walk again in about seven to eight months.

Although he had thought about the possibility of a career in medicine, it wasn't really a goal. After scoring well on military entrance tests, he was given a few options and thought that "combat medics sounded the best."

Ledford thought that he might get a chance to use his medical training in his National Guard unit, but never thought that he'd have to use it in his own apartment.

Capt. Matthew Colia, Ledford's Company Commander, said that his actions are truly extraordinary.

"This situation was one that required decisive action and Private Ledford answered the call of duty," Colia said.



Ledford, who's civilian job is a mechanic at a local auto repair shop, said that his "military training and this experience has prompted him to apply for schooling to become a paramedic."

Private 1st Class Ledford is the son of John and Colleen Ledford of Weatherford, Texas. - **36th ID PAO**

Pfc. Wil Ledford. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Capt. Mike Perry)





# Choctaw Code Talkers

A historical interpretation by  
Lt. Col. Enrique Villarreal

Native Americans have a long and proud tradition of military service to their own nations and to the United States of America. Many served with honor in all of America's wars, beginning with the Revolutionary War and on through our current operations in Afghanistan. Army archives are replete with tales of their valor. Army museums feature equipment they have used and medals they have earned under trying circumstances (108th Congress, US Senate, 2004).



Choctaw Code Talkers (Courtesy photo)



**A**LTHOUGH MOST Native Americans in 1917 were not subject to the draft because they were not US citizens, they enlisted in astonishing numbers. Even before the draft registration began, some 2,000 volunteered, eager to gain war honors. When the United States joined the war effort, over 17,000 Native Americans registered for the draft, of these 6,509 served, most as volunteers (Viola, 67). Volunteer service rewarded them with US citizenship in 1919 and their service contributed to the decision of Congress in 1924 to grant US citizenship to all Native Americans with the Indian Citizenship Act (Bernstein, 477).

Among the nearly 1,000 Native Americans in the 36th Division, there were 26 Native American languages and dialects spoken. These men were mostly from Southeastern Oklahoma. Six hundred Oklahoma Native Americans, mostly Choctaw and Cherokee, served in 36th Division's 142nd Infantry Regiment (Bloor, 1919).

The enlisted men of Company E, 142nd Infantry Regiment, 36th Division (some 208 men from 14 tribes) were exclusively Native Americans from Oklahoma, calling themselves the "E Tribe" (Vaughn, 2007). The majority of the Soldiers in Company E were individual landowners that benefited from the oil boom in Oklahoma and received large royalties from the land. Because of this, Company E soldiers also called it the Millionaire Company. Charley Choteau an Osage was reputed to be one of the wealthiest men, while Roy Mitchell once received a check for \$65,000, which was the largest single check ever seen (White, 45).

An unexpected benefit of the service of the uniformed warriors was their role as messengers and telephone operators, because the Germans were unable to understand their languages. The idea originated with officers in that regiment who asked two Choctaw soldiers to transmit messages in their native tongue. Although the use of the Native American telephone operators was not widespread during WWI, Comanche, Cheyenne, Osage and Lakota speakers were known also to have transmitted

messages on the battlefield. The first documented use of an American Indian language based on code by the U.S. military was on October 17, 1918, by Soldiers of Company E of the 142nd Infantry Regiment, 36th Division (Viola, 73).

On October 6, 1918, the 36th advanced to the front line and within days were part of a fresh attack on the Germans' strongholds. American soldiers were unprotected when crossing a wide stretch of land, save for heavy artillery fire from the 142nd Infantry, which kept the Germans pinned down, enabling the Americans to overtake the Germans in their own trenches. During the fight, they noticed something peculiar. An unusual number of German communications lines were uncovered (Callaway).

As the Division advanced against the Germans, the German units left numerous telephone lines behind, which were fully exposed and easy to find. The ease in locating these telephone lines made Colonel Alfred W. Bloor suspicious enough to believe the Germans intentionally left the line behind (Coleman). Bloor felt the Germans wanted the Americans to use their lines so they could tap into them and monitor conversations, learning of plans and strategies the Allied forces planned to use. To test the idea, Bloor instructed telephone operators to indicate that the supply dump was at a false location. Within 30 minutes, German artillery shells began falling on that location, confirming Bloor's suspicion (Allen).

After the first battle at St Etienne, Captain Elijah W. Horner, a commander of one of the companies, was strolling through the company area when he happened to overhear Privates Solomon Lewis and Mitchell Bobb conversing in their native Choctaw language. After listening for a few moments, he called Lewis aside. "Corporal," he asked, "how many of you Choctaw boys do we have in this battalion?" After a conference with Bobb, Lewis told the Captain, "We have eight men who speak fluent Choctaw





in the battalion, sir.” “Are there any of them over in headquarters company?” asked the captain. “I think that Carterby and Maytubby are over there,” Lewis replied. “You fellows wait right here,” said the captain. He got onto the telephone and discovered that, indeed, Ben Carterby and Pete Maytubby were attached to Headquarters Company. “Get them and have them stand by.” (Bishinik, 1986)

On October 17, 1918, Capt. Horner told his commanding officer Col. Bloor, “I’ve got an idea that might get the [Germans] off our backs.” Calling Lewis and Bobb, the captain told them, “Look, I’m going to give you a message to call in to headquarters. I want you to give them a message in your language. There will be somebody there who can understand it.” Capt. Horner jotted the message down and Pfc. Mitchell Bobb used the field phone to deliver the first Choctaw code message to Choctaw Ben Carterby, who then transposed it back into English for the Commander (Bishinik, 1986).

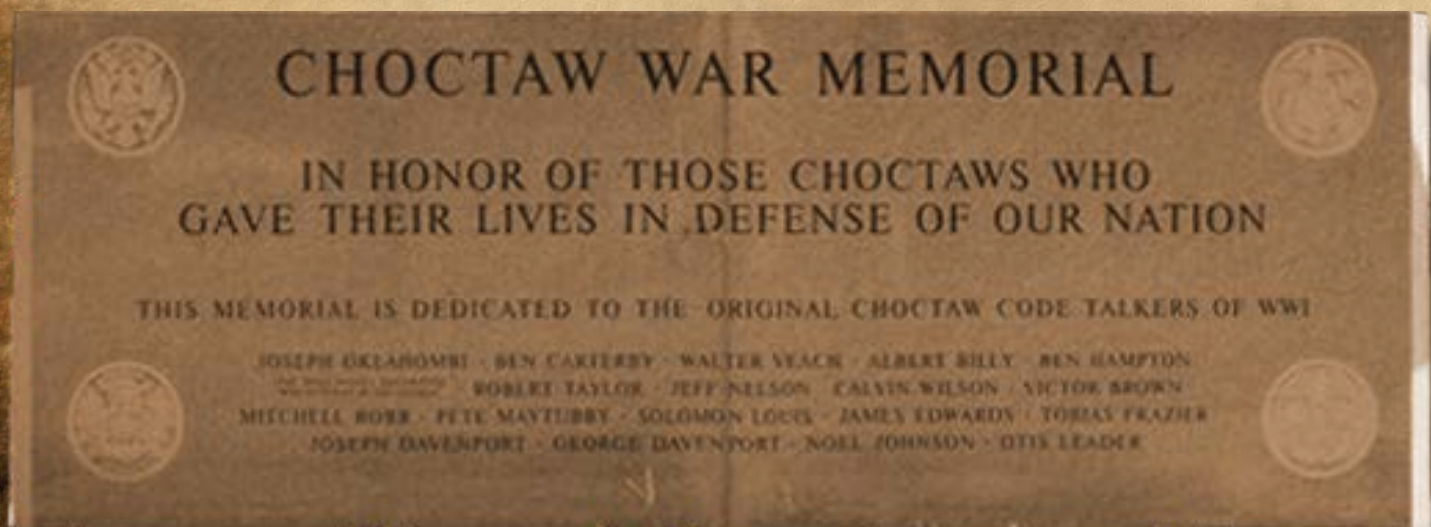
Since the Germans had been successfully deciphering American-coded messages, they had some idea of how the Allies might code their secret communications. Most Americans are of a European descent, with knowledge of English, German, French and other European languages, which the Germans were thoroughly fluent. However, the Choctaw language, on the other hand, has no European origins, so the Germans had no reference

to translate the native language of the Choctaws, which baffled the Germans tapping into the lines (Wright). Convinced that using the Choctaw Soldiers would keep the Germans from deciphering their messages, Homer selected eight Choctaws to transmit messages and an additional ten to act as runners.

On October 26, 1918, the Choctaw soldiers transmitted messages in their native language for the Allied commanders who were coordinating information in preparation for the attack the following morning. The use of the Choctaw language was a complete success and marked a turning point in the war (Archambeault, 9). Bloor expressed his gratitude towards the Choctaw Soldiers, stating, “The regiment was fortunate in having two Native American officers who spoke several of the dialects.” (Bloor)

After the battle, a captured German officer confessed that his intelligence personnel “were completely confused by the Indian language and gained no benefit whatsoever from their wiretaps”. Possibly the same officer may have added by asking, “What nationality was on the phones that night?” The only reply the German officer received was that it was only Americans, on the phones (Archambeault, 15).

By the end of the war, at least 18 men served as Choctaw Code Talkers for the Allied Forces.



Choctaw War Memorial (Courtesy photo)





After WW I had ended, the men who provided their expertise in the Choctaw language and served as code talkers were sworn to secrecy. The reason for classifying this information and not making it public was that the military believed that the Choctaw language might be of use during a future war. The idea would be adopted in the Second World War with the Marines enlisting hundreds of Navajo, Comanche and other Native American Soldiers, specifically for their language skills (Archambeault, 21-22).

The original group of WW I Choctaw code talkers honored this pledge of secrecy so fervently that some of their own families were not even aware that they had provided such an important service to the United States. It is believed that even today, some descendants still do not know if their fathers or grandfathers were code talkers in WWI. As there were at least 87 Choctaw in the 142nd Infantry Regiment of the 36th Division, it is highly possible that more than 18 Choctaw men served as code talkers before the end of the war (Archambeault, 21-22).

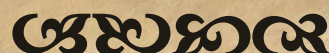
Ferdinand Foch, Marshall of France wrote, "I cannot forget the brilliant services which the valorous Indian soldiers of the American armies have rendered to the common cause and the energy, as well as the courage which they have shown to bring about victory--decisive victory--by attack". While the British and French Nations recognized and commended the actions of the Native Americans at the time, no medals were awarded (Archambeault, 23-24).

The first formal recognition for their service came from the Choctaw government, awarding the Code Talkers posthumous

Choctaw Medals of Valor, in 1986. France followed suit in 1989, awarding them the Fifth Republic's Chevalier de l'Ordre National du Merite (Knight of the National Order of Merit) (Archambeault, 24). In 1995, the Choctaw War Memorial was erected at the Choctaw Capitol Building in Tuskaahoma, Oklahoma, honoring their service. It includes a huge section of granite dedicated to the Choctaw Code Talkers. On November 15, 2008, The Code Talkers Recognition Act of 2008 was signed into law by President George W. Bush, which recognized every Native American code talker who served in the United States military during both World Wars with a Congressional Gold Medal and a silver medal duplicate to each Code Talker and their families (Artistopia, Code Talker Biography).

It may well be that contemporary encryption technology has carried us beyond the era in which the services of the Code Talkers proved most useful. However, an underlying principle remains valid—that the diversity and richness of American culture renders it far more capable than it would otherwise be of coping with the challenges of an uncertain world. Today, Native American men and women continue to enlist and serve with distinction in all branches of the armed services and their tribal communities carry on the proud traditions their culture and the defense of their homeland (108th Congress, US Senate).

#### - DISPATCH HISTORY



The men listed here were part of the 36th Division ("Choctaws"). Originally, only eight men were recognized as Choctaw Code Talkers, but as the success of using their native language as a "code" was recognized, others surfaced. According to tribal documents, there were 18 Choctaw Code Talkers, from the 36th Division (Allen): Cpt. Charles Walter Veach, Cpl. Victor Brown, Cpl. James Morrison Edwards, Cpl. Tobias William Frazier, Cpl. Solomon Bond Louis, Cpl. Pete P. Maytubby, Cpl. Calvin Wilson, Pfc. Albert Billy, Pfc. Benjamin Carterby, Pfc. George Edwin Davenport, Pfc. Joseph Oklahombi, Pvt. Mitchell Bobb, Pvt. Joseph Harvey Davenport, Pvt. Benjamin Wilburn Hampton, Pvt. Jeff Nelson, Pvt. Noel W. Johnson, Pvt. Benjamin Franklin Colbert Jr., and Pvt. Robert Taylor.





Senior Master Sgt. Miguel Arellano 149th Fighter Wing, Texas Air National Guard, and fellow Airmen visit the children's ward at the Leonardo Guzman Regional Hospital in Antofagasta, Chile, to distribute gifts and bring a few moments of joy to hospitalized children, Oct. 11, 2014. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Senior Master Sgt. Elizabeth Gilbert)